

SENATOR HENRY M. JACKSON (D., WASH.)

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(National Soft Drink Association
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Crisis in the Middle East

In an address on the war in Vietnam at noon today, Senator Jackson warned of the danger of a diversionary action in support of anti-Western elements in the Middle East. He added that Moscow was under great pressure from Hanoi and Peking to harass the West in another region. Jackson said:

"The Middle East needs our national attention. The forthcoming grant of independence to ~~Yemen~~ ^{aden} and other states of South Arabia with the attendant withdrawal of British military forces, have made the area an arena for contending nationalist and outside forces. Egypt and the Soviet Union are lending material and moral support to radical groups under the spurious banner of their being 'national liberation forces.' The outlook is ominous with raids by Egyptian aircraft against towns in Saudi Arabia.

"Four Arab nations in the Eastern Mediterranean -- Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and the UAR -- have received about \$2.5 billion worth of military equipment from Moscow and its East European allies. When more advanced items have been qualified in Moscow for export outside the bloc, the countries in this area have generally been the first recipients.

"Also, of urgent concern is the growing Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean. The Soviet fleet deployment in the Mediterranean includes major cruiser-destroyer ships, hydrographic vessels, support ships, and a number of submarines.

"The presence of Soviet naval units in the Mediterranean gives them opportunity to practice in Mediterranean navigation and to survey operations of the Sixth Fleet and NATO. At present, the Soviet force is too small to constitute an appreciable military threat to the far superior forces with which it shares the Mediterranean. However, the resurgence of Soviet naval activity in the Mediterranean since 1964 points to a Soviet intention to use naval power in the future in support of their clients in the Middle Eastern area, perhaps short of actual intervention but at a fairly high level of risk.

"Meanwhile, the Soviets have mounted a political offensive to remove American naval power from the area. In a major speech on April 24 this year, Soviet Communist Party Secretary Leonid Brezhnev emphasized that 'the time has come to demand the complete withdrawal of the U.S. Sixth Fleet from the Mediterranean.'"